

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

In bit plane coding, bit plane(s) to be encoded are selected, and coding is performed only on the  
5 selected bit plane(s). At step S701, a maximum value of data is obtained. At step S702, respective bits constructing the maximum value data are examined from a higher-order bit (MSB). At step S703, if the bit is 1, at step S704 the order of the bit from the highest order  
10 is specified, thus a highest-order significant bit-plane is specified, and the process ends. On the other hand, if it is determined at step S703 that the bit is 0, the next bit constructing the maximum value is examined.